

The Folk Process through New Media

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Abstract: Besides television and cinema, mobile phones and digital texts like the e-mail have emerged as efficient facilitators of the folk process. Most of the narratives thus transmitted are in the form of small tales, anecdotes, jokes, humorous one-liners, and riddles. This paper explores the dissemination of folktales through email and mobile phones. The author of these folktales is the transmitter of the message, and like the traditional storyteller, is not the creator of tales: what he or she does is a retelling. This paper explores the narratives in selected texts like the email and SMS over mobile phones to illustrate the folk process through the new media. The study involves field work for the collection of e-mail and SMS narratives. This was done in several stages over a period of six months. In the first stage, I made casual enquiries at around fifty homes in Chennai (Tamil Nadu, India) and Thrissur (Kerala, India) regarding email and SMS narratives. Through this enquiry, I gathered information about the kind of narratives transmitted. During the second stage, I interviewed thirty five respondents, in the age group fourteen to fifty five, in Chennai, who participated in tale transmission. Of the thirty five, fourteen were software engineers. The rest included students, housewives, bank employees, and office workers. Housewives generally did not participate in tale transmissions over mobile phones or email. Software engineers, however, despite their long working hours and pressure of work, enjoy transmitting these tales. The third stage, which did not diachronically follow the first two, was requesting friends and acquaintances to forward email and SMS narratives. I did this to collect the material in context, to study the nature of the community that sends these messages (email narratives were mostly forwarded

ones), and analyze the structure, style and linguistic aspects of the narratives. India is a great nation of storytellers and folktales and this paper explores how the new media has provided space for the folk process to continue uninterrupted.

Introduction

Besides television and cinema, mobile phones and digital texts like the e-mail have emerged as efficient facilitators of the folk process. Most of the narratives thus transmitted are in the form of small tales, anecdotes, jokes, humorous one-liners, and riddles. This paper explores the dissemination of folktales through email and mobile phones. The author of these stories is a transmitter of the message, and unlike the traditional storyteller, s/he is not creator of tales: s/he merely retells stories.

Research Methodology

My fieldwork which consisted of collecting email and SMS jokes was done in several stages, over a period of six months, from December 2006 to May 2007. In the first stage, I made casual enquiries at around fifty homes in Chennai (Tamilnadu) and Thrissur (Kerala) regarding email and SMS narratives. Through this enquiry, I gathered information about the kind of narratives transmitted and learnt that these narratives were transmitted by children, young adults and adults with a penchant for humour and storytelling. In other words, not *all* children, young adults and adults participate in this activity.

During the second stage, I interviewed thirty five respondents in Chennai in the age group of fourteen to fifty five who participated in tale transmission. Of the thirty five, fourteen were software engineers. The rest included students, housewives, bank employees, and office workers. Housewives generally did not participate in tale transmission over mobile phones or email. I interviewed software engineers to confirm that despite their long working hours and pressure of work, they did enjoy transmitting these tales. Of the fourteen interviewed, eight took great pleasure both in sending as well as reading such narratives on their mobile phones or email. Thus, as in traditional storytelling, only those who had an inclination to narrate and joke enjoyed the activity. The third stage, which did not diachronically follow the first two, involved requesting friends and acquaintances to send me email and SMS narratives. I did this to collect the material in context, to study the nature of the community that sends these messages (email narratives were mostly forwarded ones), and analyze the structure, style and linguistic aspects of the narratives.

New Media

Until the 1980's, the media relied primarily upon print and electronic mediums like the television and radio. The last twenty five years have seen rapid transformation in that, they now t rely on digital technologies, allowing for a convergence of different media.

Media convergence is defined as a phenomenon explained in terms of the "digital media". The most prominent example of media convergence is the Internet, wherein the technology for video and audio streaming is rapidly evolving. Manovich observes that whereas mass media "corresponded to the logic of the industrial mass society, which values conformity over individuality" (41), new media follows the logic of the postindustrial or globalised society whereby every citizen can construct her own lifestyle and select her ideology from a large number of choices (42).

The term 'new media' can be traced back to the 70s when it was described more as an impact on cultural studies of different aspects such as the economic as well as the social. It is only within the last twenty five years that the term has taken on a more advanced meaning. The term gained popular currency in the mid 1990s as part of a marketing strategy for the proliferation of interactive educational and entertainment CD-ROMs. It became far more widely used when internet, the mass consumed product began to emerge from 1995 onwards.

Interactivity has become a key term for a number of new media use options. It involves communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity, and interactivity between user and information ("New Media" Wikipedia). Internet replaces the "one-to-many" model of traditional mass communication with the possibility of a "many-to-many" web of communication. Any individual with the appropriate technology can now produce his or her online media and include images, text, and sound about whatever he or she chooses. So the new media with technology convergence shifts the model of mass communication, and radically shapes the ways we interact and communicate with one another. Interactivity may be considered a central concept in understanding new media, but different media forms possess different degree of interactivity New media have created virtual realities that are becoming mere extensions of the world we live in (ibid).

What counts as new media is often debated, and is dependent on the definitions used. However, there are a few that have been widely accepted as forms of new media: Mashup, Internet Art, Video games, multimedia CD-ROMS, software, web sites, blogs and wikis, email, mobile devices, interactive television, hypertext fiction, and so on.

This paper explores the narratives in select texts like the email and SMS sent by mobile phones to illustrate the folk process through the new media. Narratives thus transmitted through digital texts appropriate electronic writing techniques like the hypertext.

Hypertext

Hypertext is a form of electronic writing that allows writers to link paragraphs or pages of text using computer-mediated connections that, in essence, enable computer users to draw relationships and make connections between discrete ideas (Jones 227). In shaping hypertext, its inventor, Ted Nelson's fundamental insight was the notion that human thinking is non-linear. Take a fictitious example: a man named Mark is at work. Around noon, he realizes that he is hungry, and the image of a hot dog forms in his mind. From there, his thoughts flip to his pet terrier Jack, who, Mark suddenly remembers was never let out for his morning toilet run. From there, of course, Mark's thinking moves to the idea that he will probably have a big, disgusting mess to clean up in his apartment that evening. Mark has forgotten all about his appetite; and is now thinking about cleaning solvents. In strictly logical terms, there is no clear linear connection between the idea of a hot dog and the idea of cleaning solvents. But strictly logical links are not necessary for thoughts to emerge. Mark's mind followed his own internal mental links, a trail of thought unique to his own perspective, life situation, and interests. His mind followed that path from one concept to the other fluidly, in the span of seconds. Non-linear links like these are the basis of much of, if not most of, human thought (Jones 277). Traditionally, writing has been bound inflexibly to the printed page, in linear structures.

"Whereas the writer traditionally has been completely in charge, telling the reader exactly what to read and all but dictating the exact order in which it should be read, hypertext places more control in the hands of the reader, who no longer has to plow through pages of uninteresting detail to get to the meat of a work" (230).

These new possibilities have been explored by a number of experimental authors, notably Michael Joyce, whose *afternoon, a story*, is an early and famous experiment in hypertext fiction. In it, Joyce presents the blocks of text that make up a story, but allows readers to select hyperlinks to connect the prose in any order that they choose. The end result is that the reader is nearly as responsible for the outcome of the story as is the writer; the writer creates the story's framework, and the reader is set loose to explore its many possibilities (230). Just as academic theoretical discourse was questioning the centrality of the author in the production of

texts, hypermedia suggests that, in a future of networked digital media, responsibility would shift from author to reader.

The Internet and Folktales

The Internet is a worldwide network which links millions of computers and connects millions of people from backgrounds as diverse as the academia, business, military, and the arts. This huge network introduces an absolutely new situation in literature and arts and incites reflection on its impact and potential. The goal of this section is to investigate some of the interactive developments currently taking place on the Internet with regard to storytelling. The paper then proceeds to explore the folk process through a popular new medium, the mobile phone.

Within a quarter of a century, the possibilities to digitally store and exchange folk narratives have expanded dramatically. The democratic medium of the internet made it possible for many to share their stories with others. One of the earliest (1994) and still one of the finest folktale collections is the German Gutenberg Project, in 2006, containing some 1600 fairy tales, 1200 fables and 2500 legends (see <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/index.htm>). The English version of the Gutenberg Project includes several others like the Arabian nights (http://gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page). A fine collection of folktales can be found on D.L.Ashliman's site on *Folklore and Mythology* (<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>) as well as David K Brown's site on *Folklore, Myth, and Legend* (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/storfolk.html>). There are several web pages to be found, dedicated to a single oeuvre, like the one containing the works of Hans Christian Anderson. Modern genres like urban legends and jokes are collected on the Internet as well. The most famous site on urban legends is *Snopes* (<http://www.snopes.com>) which contains thousands of versions and for every story tries to determine whether it is true or false or somewhere in between. Apart from this site there are *Urbanlegends.com*, *Urban Legends and Folklore*, the site of *Scambusters*, *Urban Legends and Modern Myths* site and so on (Meder (<http://members.chello.nl/m.jong9/Internet.htm>)).

Blogs

In the above cases, the Internet more or less functions as a worldwide digital library. The question now is, how does this world wide net impact traditional forms like storytelling? There are several blogs created for exchanging stories, telling of stories, folktales from various regions, and so on. The You Tube, for instance, gives the opportunity to listen to stories online, posted by anybody who believes he has a good story to tell along with the video recording of the telling. John Miles Foley, who has

authored several books on oral tradition and folklore, has launched what he calls a developmental blog entitled, "Oral Tradition and the Internet" (www.otandit.blogspot.com). His aim has been to put some basic ideas concerning orality and the internet into preliminary shape and to elicit comments from readers of the blog. His intention is to expand these suggestions and comments into a book which is provisionally entitled "Pathways of the Mind: Oral Tradition and the Internet". Foley argues that neither the oral tradition nor the internet are fixed, spatialized series of symbols, designed to be decoded visually according to strict conventions. In other words, says Foley, they are not texts, whether illuminated manuscripts, mass paperbacks, or cave walls. They are alive and always changing (in a rule governed way), always evolving in relation to their environments, never absolutely fixed and static, never final, complete or uneditable. Moreover, they positively thrive on a regimen of kinetics and change, drawing strength from their endless potential and flexibility (Foley 2006).

Email Narratives

Besides blogs, the most popular form of virtual storytelling is sending each other textual and visual narratives by e-mail. One of the advantages of virtual joking is that one does not need to be a gifted narrator anymore: all that is needed is the ability to cut and paste or forward a funny text. The computer will keep every binary byte in its place, while the sender can still gain prestige as a funny person (Meder). Apparently, one of the disadvantages is that, a lot of jokes show no variation anymore, whereas in oral transmission, the narrator would improvise and adapt the joke to his liking and that of his audience. However, of the fourteen software engineers from TCS, Chennai, I interviewed, eight said they send SMS and email jokes to friends and relatives. Asked whether they edit what they send, all eight of them said they make corrections, add or delete to suit the context.

A close analysis of these narratives reveal that they are not meant just to be funny and make others laugh. They are at times a commentary on current events, the expression of a point of view, a personal perspective to an important event or happening or incident that made news. Jokes emerged in the wake of unexpected events, such as the space shuttle Challenger explosion, the unexpected death of Princess Diana, the attack on World Trade Centre etc. Rosemary V Hathaway (2005) makes a study of jokes, attitudes and tales that appeared in the media, especially e-mails and television programs, in the aftermath of the September 9 attack on the World Trade Center. The dominant visual lore on email, the sheer spectacle of the World Trade Centre collapse, memories of witnesses,

fictive creation of the terrorist boyfriend, and numerous others show how folktales adapt to new technologies and how new technologies, in turn, create new types of folklore. The email narrative pasted on page 225 arrived in the aftermath of the overwhelming response to the release of the Rajanikanth starrer, *Sivaji*. Although humorous, this narrative is satirical and ridicules the typical macho heroes of Indian films, with their demi- god- like portrayal and larger than life image. It points a finger back at the society that encourages such unrealistic, melodramatic and ostentatious display of spectacle in Indian cinema. The caricature of Rajanikanth in the costume of Superman complements the humor and satire in the narrative.

The use of visuals, be it pictures, cartoons, comic strips, or even video images, is popular in such email narratives. One such narrative that appeared in my mail with the title "The Subservient Programmer" is a video clipping of a man bent over his computer. Using a text box one can send various commands to him like 'eat', 'sleep', 'laugh', 'drink', 'smoke', 'die' and so on. The subservient programmer executes all the commands without any complaint. The mail has apparently originated in an interactive web page <http://www.subservientprogrammer.com>

SIMPLY CHENNAI

last word

There's Nothing Rajni Can't



- ☞ Outer space exists because it's afraid to be on the same planet with Rajnikant.
- ☞ Rajnikant has counted to infinity—twice.
- ☞ When Rajnikant does a pushup, he isn't lifting himself up, he's pushing earth down.
- ☞ Rajnikant is so fast, he can run around the world and punch himself in the back of the head.
- ☞ Rajnikant doesn't wear a watch, HE decides what time it is.
- ☞ Rajnikant gave Mona Lisa that smile.
- ☞ Rajnikant can slam a revolving door.
- ☞ Rajnikant's house has no doors, only walls that he walks through.
- ☞ Rajnikant grinds his coffee with his teeth and boils the water with his own rage.
- ☞ If you Google search 'Rajnikant getting kicked', you will generate zero results. It just doesn't happen.
- ☞ It takes Rajnikant 20 minutes to watch *60 Minutes*.
- ☞ The Bermuda Triangle used to be the Bermuda Square, until Rajnikant kicked one of the corners off.
- ☞ There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; Rajnikant lives in Chennai.
- ☞ Rajnikant once ate an entire bottle of sleeping pills. They made him blink.
- ☞ The only things that run faster and longer than Rajnikant are his films.
- ☞ Rajnikant's every step creates a mini whirlwind. Hurricane Katrina was the result of a morning jog.
- ☞ Where there is a will, there is a way. Where there is Rajnikant, there is no other way.

Narratives on e-mail also show how traditional lore is appropriated to comment on a contemporary situation. The one quoted below explains how something seemingly trivial such as email messages can,

when examined collectively and in context, provide a vivid portrait of a particular social context:

OLD VERSION.....

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long building his house and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks the ant's a fool and laughs & dances & plays the summer away. Come winter, the ant is warm and well fed. The grasshopper has no food or shelter so he dies out in the cold.

MODERN VERSION

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter. The grasshopper thinks the ant's a fool and laughs & dances & plays the summer away.

Come winter, the shivering grasshopper calls a press conference and demands to know why the ant should be allowed to be warm and well fed while others are cold and starving.

NDTV, BBC, CNN show up to provide pictures of the shivering grasshopper next to a video of the ant in his comfortable home with a table filled with food.

The World is stunned by the sharp contrast. How can this be that this poor grasshopper is allowed to suffer so?

- Arundhati Roy stages a demonstration in front of the ant's house.

- Medha Patkar goes on a fast along with other grasshoppers demanding that grasshoppers be relocated to warmer climates during winter.

- Amnesty International and Ban Ki Moon criticizes the Indian Government for not upholding the fundamental rights of the grasshopper.

- The Internet is flooded with online petitions seeking support to the grasshopper (many promising Heaven and Everlasting Peace for prompt support as against the wrath of God for non-compliance) .

- Opposition MP's stage a walkout.

- Left parties call for "Bharat Bandh" in West Bengal and Kerala demanding a Judicial Enquiry.

- CPM in Kerala immediately passes a law preventing Ants from working hard in the heat so as to bring about equality of poverty among ants and grasshoppers.

-Lalu Prasad allocates one free coach to Grasshoppers on all Indian Railway Trains, aptly named as the 'Grasshopper Rath'.

- Finally, the Judicial Committee drafts the Prevention of Terrorism Against Grasshoppers Act [POTAGA]", with effect from the beginning of the winter.
- The ant is fined for failing to comply with POTAGA and, having nothing left to pay his retroactive taxes, his home is confiscated by the Government and handed over to the grasshopper in a ceremony covered by NDTV.
- Arundhati Roy calls it "a triumph of justice". Lalu calls it 'Socialistic Justice'. CPM calls it the 'revolutionary resurgence of the downtrodden'
- Ban Ki Moon invites the grasshopper to address the UN General Assembly. *****
- Many years later...
- The ant has since migrated to the US and set up a multibillion dollar company in silicon valley
- 100s of grasshoppers die of starvation somewhere in India.

Narratives through SMS

There has been a shift in emphasis toward the joke in India and probably elsewhere. Tales that an average urban, educated person remembers are the short, witty ones. Mobile phones have become a convenient medium for the dissemination of these tales, due to their portability, universally comprehensive abbreviated language, and in places like India, due to the affordability of SMS as well. Most of the narratives thus transmitted are in the form of small tales, anecdotes, jokes, humorous one-liners, and riddles. They are just the right size to feature on the tiny mobile phone screen, easy to type and quickly dispatched.

Email and SMS Jokes

An examination of the content of narratives collected by me showed that there are differences between the ones that are transmitted on mobile phones and those over e-mail. The mobile narratives are very brief, mostly one-liners, riddle-like humorous statements, jokes, mainly *sardhar* (jokes featuring *sardhars* or the Sikhs of Punjab, India) anecdotes, and so on. The e-mail narratives are longer, more pedagogic, include tales as well as jokes, include more visuals, some with morals, some informative, didactic, , and use the hypertext technology to good effect. Both include visuals in their storytelling: while mobile narratives mostly use symbols and images like the smiley, emails use more elaborate ones like , cartoons, photographs, and so on as in a conventional picture storytelling. The language of email narratives is more complete in the sense that it is not as abbreviated as in the SMS. Although email 'letters', especially informal

ones, are abbreviated, the narratives, by and large, adhere to the rules of conventional language.

Jokelore as Folktale

In his essay on folktales in *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (1968 125-145), Jan Harold Brunvand defines them as “traditional prose narratives that are strictly fictional and told primarily for entertainment, although they may also illustrate a truth or point a moral. Folktales range in length and subject matter from some European stories about fantastic wonders and magical events that takes hours—even days—of narration, to brief American topical jokes with concentrated plots and snappy punch lines that are told in minutes” (125). Jokes were thus derived from folktales and there is a very small demarcation between the two. In the chapter on “Modern Folklore: Folktale and Legends of Big Cities” in *American Folklore* (1959, 244-276), Dorson explores popular jokes as folktales in college campuses and urban communities in the city. He observes that ‘jokelore’ owes much to the mass media of radio, television and journalism.

Jokes are described as “humorous oral narratives. The narrative joke—also called the jocular folktale, humorous folktale, humorous anecdote, merry tale, farcical tale, jest, and *Schwank*—is simple in form, earthy in content, ancient in origin, ubiquitous in distribution, and endless in variety” (Baker 414). Varieties of narrative jokes include tall tales, catch tales, humorous animal tales, jokes about married couples, jokes about drunks and lazy people, stories about the wise and the foolish, jokes about the clergy and religious figures, jokes about professional or occupational groups, and jokes about contemporary pastimes (415).

What Baker observed about North American jokelore is relevant to jokes in general: Many narrative jokes told in North America are familiar forms of international humorous folktales, modified by time, locale, folk tradition, and the individual joke tellers. The influence of popular culture on modern jokelore gives certain uniformity to the form, content and theme of humorous folktales throughout the North American oral tradition. North Americans live in the midst of a prevailing popular culture spread by the mass media, which influences jokes, just as, popular culture nourishes, and is nourished by the folklore. The influence of popular culture on joke telling is not a recent development though, as formerly jokes were preserved in jest books and chapbooks. In the late 20th century, electronic media, including e-mail, as well as an expanded print media spread a much larger variety of jokes, including bawdy material, once taboo in mainstream popular culture, but fairly common now on the Internet and in popular collections of humor and

slick magazines that are readily available in drugstores, supermarkets, and shopping-mall bookstores. Though all kinds of jokes have been assimilated into popular culture, the narrative joke remains one of the most collectible forms of folk literature in North America (414-16).

Jokes and their popularity

Jokes remain popular because they touch on every aspect of human life, may occur spontaneously at any time in almost any social context, and are short, thus fitting very well into the fast pace of contemporary urban folklife. In the fictional world of jokes and tales, virtually anything is possible. Talking animals and machines, Martians, and even God serve in the cast of characters. But this is as much a feature of folktales as well. Is there any difference between tales and jokes? Elliot Oring sums up the differences and similarities between tales and jokes in the essay "Between Jokes and Tales" (1992: 81-93): The tale is generally longer than the joke which, by comparison, is relatively brief. The world created in the tale emphasizes the normal, the typical, and the rational; the world of the joke invokes the abnormal, the bizarre, and the nonsensical. There is a tendency for the tale to be explicitly didactic whereas the joke seems to avoid any explicit moralization. The joke tends to be narrated in the present while the tale is situated in the past. The tale hangs upon deeds and their consequences whereas the joke depends on speech and the peculiarities of language. The tale is frequently multi-episodic and ambles on toward some kind of narrative resolution, whereas the joke is usually restricted to a single scene and culminates abruptly with a punch line. (81-82). Oring arrives at the above distinctions solely through textual comparison. Other distinctions that have been noted attend to conditions of narration. For example, tales evoke smiles whereas jokes generate laughter. The demands for novelty in joke telling are far greater than in tale telling. Tales and jokes are not usually performed by the same narrators. The tale teller's repertoire endures in memory and remains fairly constant, while the joke teller's changes constantly in response to current joke fashions (82). But Oring is uncertain about the accuracy of these differences: "It is, of course, possible to think of counterexamples to many of these distinctions between joke and tale. Jokes are often told in the past tense, and a tale could be narrated in the present tense and still remain essentially a tale. There are numerous jokes whose fictional worlds are normal and realistic, and equally many tales whose contrived scenarios make excessive demands upon the hearer's imagination. Some jokes endure in memory over decades and are continually retold. There are longer jokes and shorter tales, and certainly, there are numerous jokes that are multi-episodic as there are tales that consist of only a single episode. Some jokes elicit only the vaguest of smiles, while certain

tales may provoke raucous and sustained laughter. And even a joke can be employed for didactic ends, while a humorous tale may be told without any didacticism whatsoever" (82). Thus Oring concludes that the only distinction that seems critical in distinguishing the joke from the humorous tale "is the presence or absence of what is colloquially referred to as a punch line" (82). It is not the intent of this study to explore the structure and technique of jokes, but to prove that of the different varieties of folktales they are the most favored narrative on the SMS via mobile phones.

Community Redefined

Orality knits persons together into a community, said Ong (1982: 136), and McLuhan's term for the effects of electronic communication is 'retribalization.' The spoken word knits people together into community; writing promotes distance and individualization. "The new orality of electronic devices has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas" (Ong 1982:136).

The social function of much of Internet communication has been a major theme of the literature in recent years, especially with reference to the concept of a 'virtual community'. David Crystal explores the contentious nature of this notion and arrives at his own conclusion: The mere fact of having engaged in an Internet activity does not produce in a user the sort of sense of identity and belonging which accompanies the term *community*. On the other hand, some Internet situations do promote such a sense of belonging, which comes from the experience of sharing with unseen others a space of communication. The internet is not as global a medium as it might at first appear to be. While in principle much has been made of its ability to transcend limitations of physical environments, cultural differences, and time-zones, thereby allowing people from anywhere to communicate with people anywhere else about anything at all, in practice, the types of communication that takes place are much more restricted and parochial (Crystal 59). Narratives on email and SMS are shared only with friends and relatives. They are circulated only among those who enjoy them and appreciate them. Not everybody received such jokes and stories on their email or mobile. So also in traditional storytelling, stories are told only by those who have an inclination and talent to do so.

Author

The internet has brought about a shift in the role of the author and reader. Readers become authors too, considering the non-linear

hypertextual reading. The hyper links provide the reader with different directions to pursue. Besides, as Bill Marsh observes, “reading “time” in literary hypermedia requires that we read in time, that we get to the work in time, and that we use our time wisely in navigating its surfaces (Marsh). Like traditional storytelling, nobody takes credit for creating the narrative. They are all retellings or forwarded messages. There is no stress on novelty, the old *sardar* jokes and one liners are repeated over and over again. The preservative nature of print and writing is shattered and tales survive in the repeated telling. Degh, contemplating on the series of traditions which pass on the theme orally, demonstrates Sharp’s argument that the authorship belongs equally to all those who have taken part in the transmission (1989: 50). Thus the authorship, originally individual, becomes communal. The original maker of the joke remains anonymous most of the time. Like traditional stories, digitally transmitted ones are being recycled every once in a while.

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